

This is W. T. Olds and, uh, with the Southeast region of the Fish and Wildlife Service in Atlanta, Georgia and I'm meeting today with Harold W. Benson who is the former assistant regional director for Refuges and Wildlife here in the Southeast. And this is part of the oral history project for the Fish and Wildlife Service. So, Harold, I appreciate you coming in today. So, maybe we could just start out with when and where you were born and grew up and went to school and that sort of thing.

ANSWER: I was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, March 29, 1929, in fact it was 9:29 in the morning that I was born so all of ----- fit to go. (Right) My early years were essentially in Twin Cities. Went to grade school there, graduated from Edison High School in Minneapolis, Northeast Minneapolis, famous northeast ethnic neighborhood. Played on an all nation basketball team, so diversity is not something's that's really new to me. My father had a grocery business. I, of course, being the son of a grocery man spent some time delivering groceries and working in the store. As I grew up, I had quite an affinity for the grocery business but when it came time to, when he asked me if I wanted to be in the grocery business when I finally got out of school, I said probably not. At that time he decided that he would sell the store. In fact, he sold it in 1953 when I was in the service and when I came to work for Fisher Nuts then he ----- working career that way.

QUESTION: When did you graduate from high school?

ANSWER: I graduated in the year 1947 in a class of about 270 kids, I think, at that time. That I recall. I was, I guess, one of the, as far as the draft is concerned, missed the draft by six months. I think the class before me was drafted and we escaped the draft. I went from there into the University of Minnesota. Into forestry in 1947 and had to compete with all the vets. It was a good time to be in school because those guys were

really interested in learning. They kept the pressure on us youngsters and thought maybe we would have some fun.

QUESTION: Where is the University of Minnesota?

ANSWER: I went to the farm campus. It's in St. Paul and at that time there were about thirty-five hundred students. It's now grown measurably since those days. The forestry school was a big school; it went into the university at that time. Very good school. Most of my professors have passed on at this point. Early good base of school and farming. I graduated in 1951 and I went on to graduate school for a master's degree in forestry. At the same time I enlisted in the Naval Reserves and this was during the Korean War. I actually went in January of 1953. Went to OCS in Newport, Rhode Island and became an Ensign and from there I went to Western Pacific. I reported in San Diego on the ship about the next day. You know you send a letter off to the captain to tell him you're coming and he's supposed to tell you what's going on but I never got whatever that returned mail was so I drove my car out there and the first problem was what to do with this goofy car while I go to sea for nine months. Anyway, I had a relative in Los Angeles and he came down and got the car and that sort of solved that.

QUESTION: So you sailed out of San Diego?

ANSWER: I sailed out of San Diego to the Western Pacific during the Korean War. While we were home ported in San Diego we spent a great deal of time in Yokosuka that was the second home port. During the four years I was on that ship I was never home at Christmas time.

QUESTION: What ship were you on?

ANSWER: U.S.S. Frank Knox—it's a destroyer, radar picket. I probably hold the

longest record for being on any one ship for one period of time. That wasn't bad news necessarily because I was able to advance up the line of various jobs. I was a communications officer, navigator, combat information officer, operations officer, eventually qualified for officer of the deck and air controller. Just about anything you can do qualifies you as executive officer and as a matter of fact commanding officer of a ship so by the time I got off the Frank Knox, I had a wide, varied experience. There were only five officers on a destroyer and you have about 285 enlisted. And destroyer sailors is a go, go, go situation. It's not a big ship so you get to do all the jobs. That was a good experience.

QUESTION: So you spent four years there, did you?

ANSWER: Yeah, on the Knox and then I (when did you go aboard the Knox?) I went in 1953 and I left in May of 1958. I went from there to the ----- research in Chicago. I opted to stay on active duty for another year. While I was there, I was married September 22, 1956 and we lived in Chicago and Betty got bacteria intracavernous on the heart and she was hospitalized for about six weeks. At that time, I had applied for post-graduate school at Monterey, California and had been accepted and it was advised that it did not look like Betty was doing all that good and I was advised to get out of the service and try some other career. I did that and Betty recovered and did quite well. But by that point I had already made my decision to leave the service and left the service but did remain in the reserve. I did serve thirty-two years total service connected with the Navy and retired as a Captain and was in the zone for Admiral a couple of times, but after thirty-two years if you don't make it you sort of say (Japanese). During that time I had several commands. Fleet division of the ship, served with the commander and chief of the Atlantic fleet, and special assignments. In fact there was a special

unit set up and we drilled monthly. We traveled when I was in Washington to Norfolk. When I was in Atlanta, here, the first time we traveled to Norfolk. We spent a lot of time traveling to Norfolk and it ended up being my money to participate in that part of the reserve program. When I was here, I was CO of the reserve officer volunteer group. When I left her, change of command, obviously, I went to Minneapolis and picked up the same job in Minneapolis. I finally retired in July of 1983. They suggested I retire in 1983.

QUESTION: You had thirty-two years (thirty-two years, yes) military service. When did you leave active duty?

ANSWER: I left in May of 1958. It was a good experience. I look back on it, it was nuclear engineering that I was pursuing; I don't know where I would have ended up but I had a high interest in that. A friend of mine did pursue that career and I know he retired from the Navy now and I know he had good duty that whole time. But, that's one of those things that could have happened. What really happened is when I got out of the Navy my desire was to work for the pulp and paper industry. I had a couple of friends in there and if you talk about recession this is one of the times when major corporations were not looking to add to the payrolls. I pursued and traveled around the country, made a lot of inquiries, interviewed and all the rest of it and they all told me the same thing "We're not hiring now." I got sort of discouraged and thought maybe I should go back into the service. Then, I had actually moved back to the ranch, my farm in Wisconsin. Betty was there while I was looking for this job, and I thought, why don't I just go by the university and see my old advisor and see what some of the guys are doing. I met Ken ----- who is a real good friend of mine. He had polio so he was at the university and had been there a long time. I said "Do you know anybody that's hiring?" He says "----- with Fish and Wildlife Services is

hiring.” I said, “Who’s the Fish and Wildlife Service?” He said, “Well, they’ve got an active program; why don’t you go down there and see. I think there’s a couple of your classmates working there.” So, I went there, and this is kind of interesting. I met Forest Carpenter and he told me there were no jobs. “Don’t hire foresters,” he said, and they had foresters on the staff at that time but they weren’t hiring. I went down to see Audrey Byrd who was the personnel lady, real nice lady. She told me the same thing. I was about ready to leave and I’m going up the hallway and here comes Richard Mundinger who was a classmate of mine in the service employ. (What was the name again?) Richard Mundinger (Mundinger) He’s in realty. He said ---- Ben Shaffer. Well, Ben Shaffer was a classmate of mine too. I said, “How’d you guys get a job because they told me they don’t hire foresters.” And they got all this Navy experience, boy, I said, “I’m ready to go.” He says “Come on back and I’ll introduce you to our boss, O. E. Recroft.” He was the chief of realty. (O.E. Re-) Recroft (Recroft) Recroft he was, in the old days, when he started, he started as a ---- engineer and he did all the initial survey work at Okefenokee and a lot of work for the Southeast. He wasn’t a college graduate but he was about the sharpest guy I ever met. Anyway, they took me in and introduced me and he said “Yeah, we just hired Tom Smith and we’re going to hire another guy for this so-called Wetlands Program that is coming up in about a year or a couple of years from now.” And we had done a lot of work. The region had done a lot of work in the Wetlands Program. “You have to get on a register.” I said, “What is a register?” Well, he said, “You have to go down and take this examination and whatever.” He told me how to do that and I went down to do that and then I went back to the farm. This was in, I guess, maybe July or early August. (You were about what fifty nine?) Yeah. (Or fifty eight?) Fifty-eight, because I was still at the farm. About October, sometime late October, I get

this telegram from Audrey Byrd saying I had a job if I wanted it. I reported in 1958 about the first of November at the Fish and Wildlife Service. The job was in realty in the ---- Wetlands Program. So, initially, I did all the training and everything in the Federal Aid Program. Did State appraisals and review appraisals for the state. When the program funding became available we did all the pre-acquisition paperwork in the Dakota’s to develop sales information and basic backgrounds for appraisals. Interesting thing there that there were two guys of all the senior people in realty in Minneapolis, nobody would go to the coast. New program and I thought there is an opportunity with the Fish and Wildlife Service. Tom Smith and I. Tom started about three months before I did. We said here’s the opportunity and I’m going to take it. We bought a house in February. We had no more than moved in the house and came home and Betty said “You have that funny look in your eyes.” I said, “Yeah, we’re going to North Dakota.” She says, “Where’s that?” She says “There’s no trees out there, are there?” I said “No, this is an opportunity for a new employee to go out there and see if he can do anything.” We put the house on the market, it didn’t sell, then finally in October the house sold and we had already decided to move. So Tom Smith and I were out there alone from July to October. We had an office in his place to begin with and when his wife finally got there she said “That’s not for me. You guys find another place.” We were able to find a regional office to get us a motel room at the Ranch House Motel in Jamestown, North Dakota. That is where the Wetlands Acquisition Program really started. We had done some pilot work the year before but making ---- and bought a couple feed tracks but this was all to see whether or not the program would go. So Tom Smith and I were the forerunners of the Wetlands Program into the coast which continues today. Initially, it was a program where there was one hundred and forty four million dollars that was to be paid back at the end of

seven years and the United States Government forgave that loan, it was going to be paid back by ----- and the program was in Minnesota, Western Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and the main counties in Nebraska. That's the way it all started. There were five wetland acquisition offices. I was in Jamestown and led the program in Jamestown with Tom Smith. Tom Smith was ultimately called in the regional office in about a year so I was in Jamestown by myself for about a year. Bought the Northern Prairie and Wildlife Research Station with the secretary of ----- looking over my shoulder. Well, it was R. W. Burwell. (Now Burwell was the Regional Director in Minneapolis at that time) who was just recently deceased. I think it was in November of this year and I had seen him at the twentieth anniversary of Northern Prairie a few years ago and he looked just like he did the last time I seen him. Fine gentleman, a real fine gentleman. We aggressively pursued Wetland Acquisition and back in those early years we spent all the money we could spend and I know, myself, I had taken almost two hundred agreements the first year and that's unheard of, I think, in today's problems with state government and approvals and things of that nature. (Two hundred agreements in a year) Yeah (that's almost one a day) Yeah, I mean, I traveled thirty some thousand miles, I think, in the first year. Burnt up a 1961 Valiant, in fact, GSA called it back because they said you don't get enough mileage out of that car for it being a compact, but there was only one reason, it just went too fast. (Laugh) There were only two Valiants in North Dakota at that time. The other one was in South Dakota and they were getting this twenty and twenty-five miles and I was getting twelve and thirteen so they knew something was wrong with that car or whatever so they pulled that car back and gave me another one. I can't remember what it was. The service was buying those old Studebakers at that time so I got a Studebaker. Which wasn't really a good car but it was fast. I was in

Jamestown, North Dakota from November of '58 till August of 1962 when I was asked to come in to Minneapolis and supervise the realty aspect of the Wetlands Program. When I went in to Minneapolis, then Tom Smith became my deputy and I continued managing that program until about 1971. At that time there was a discussion about, you know, "you been in the region too long you need to go to Atlanta or you need to go someplace." The service was trying to work up a deal between Bill Ashe and myself. Where Bill would go to Minneapolis and I'd come to Atlanta. A lot of that happened because Bill ----- wouldn't let Bill go and Bill didn't want to go anyway so that thing all faded. So we continue. I became the Assistant Regional Supervisor of Realities, still managed the Wetlands Program at the same time and then about 1973, there's these vacancies occurred in Washington. One was review appraiser, the other was chief of the planning wetlands acquisition planning. Walt McAllister, who was the chief of realty, called up and said, "You and Bill Ashe have got to apply for these jobs. I don't know which job each one of you will get but you're gonna have to apply." And there was a lot of pressure. Same time Bob Jorgensen who was my boss in realty was thinking about retiring, but I didn't know that, but I knew before I left. He said, "You know you're the guy who should get this job." But I had already applied for Washington and Bill got the review appraiser's job and I got the chief of planning.

QUESTION: So you and Bill Ashe went to Washington at the same time?

ANSWER: At the same time. But then President Nixon called a freeze and they wanted me to come up there without having any papers and whatever and I said I'm not going any place until this freeze gets squared away and then I know I can move and all the rest. That eventually did happen. I went up, I think, in August of 1973, into that job.

My only problem with working in Washington is the commute. One hour to work and one hour back. I thought, boy, oh, boy this life is too short. My wife liked Washington. We were living in Springfield in the Kings Park West area and it was a real nice area and she thought this was really great. A fellow who had worked for me in the Wetlands Program actually was our neighbor, Barry Peterson, and his wife and my wife learned the city and they became tour guides and anybody who came in town they toured them everywhere so my wife became known as one of those tour ladies. In any event, I was there about two and a half years. Bob Lines retired, Al Bonsack was here and I hired Al Bonsack in Minneapolis; he worked for me in Minneapolis and went to Portland. In any event, talking to Al he said, "Bob's going to retire, and boy, I would like to get out of this Washington office. It's an opportunity. I applied for the job here in Atlanta. I came to Atlanta as Chief of Realty. This was in 1973. The program was not as aggressive as it is today. There wasn't a whole lot of money. We did a lot of work for the State of Georgia and ----- was special assistant here. He was over George and Bob Lines was at Georgia ----- so we worked a cooperative agreement with George so we did the map aiding survey and we did some appraisal review and thanks to the State of Georgia they helped pay the salary to maintain a staff while we were in sort of down times. I was in realty until the area office situation was developed and they had this so-called Assistant Regional Director's job, I can't remember exactly what year that was, whether it was 75 or 76 when we set up the first area offices for Assistant Regional Directors. So I applied and was selected as Assistant Regional Director for Federal Aid and Endangered Species; that was the line up at that time. Don Pfitzer, actually was handling the Endangered Species prior to that and sort of ----- only some work on the Citrus Annual Crane, I think, was the principal species that we were working on at that

time. During that period, endangered species was in its nucleolus stages. I happen to believe, that I think, I wrote the first biological opinion on the Everglade Kite, found in the Everglades and that was an interesting experience working with some of our research people. Unless they had things printed and proved by everybody, they wouldn't want to tell you a lot of information. So, I wrote that, basically, with Paul Sykes. He was the Everglades Kite expert and Tom Martin down there at the refuge. And it finally got through that (What refuge was Tom on?) He was on Loxahatchee. So we went through that and worked with Eastern Airlines group and were actually using the airport down there, the new airport. (This was what? The Everglades Jet Port?) Everglades Jet Port, yeah. They wanted to continue to use that and we met with some EIS experts who were preparing the environmental impact statement and actually went down to South America and performed some experiments and flights over the Everglades, basically to try to prove their point that they could have an airport and the Everglade Kite at the same time. Didn't quite work out that way but they spent quite a bit of money in trying to do that. Ron Lambertson, who was a solicitor at that point was quite active in that whole thing. He and I attended several meetings together with the Eastern Group and others that were involved with the Kite. At the same time the snail darter program was going on in great measure and we worked pretty closely with the Washington office. Al O'Connor and again the solicitor's office and whatever had many, many meetings and TVA spent millions of dollars investigating the deal with the snail darter. As time went on, additional population of snail darters were found. But TVA did their best, I think, at that point to try to accommodate the service although they kept reminding us that they weren't on the ----- act and they didn't have to do any of this stuff. Bottom line on the endangered species program in those early days was that nobody knew a whole lot about it. We had

to go out and hold a lot of meetings on what's consultation, what are the species, what are your responsibilities under the act, and so on. We got a lot of good experience, I worked with Ray Golpert, who was a field solicitor and we held a lot of public meetings, many of which were as (pratusus?) as they are today. I don't think things have changed a whole lot. But, in any event, it was a good experience and I was in that job until, well, I can't remember the year now. The ARW job became available. In fact, there were several jobs. There was a Deputy job in Denver, there was an ARW job in Minneapolis. I got a phone call from Tom ----- who is currently chief of realty, here, and I should regress for a minute because, I will do that, of all the people I hired in the Wetlands Program most of them became Chief of Realty across the country in Denver to Albuquerque to Minneapolis and Boston (Can you recall some of the names of those fellows?) Bob Miller was in Boston, Tom Smith was in Albuquerque, Bill Swanson is in Minneapolis right now, in Portland, well I can't remember the name right now but Tom was in Portland for a while and then whoever followed him was in the Wetlands Program as well. So by and large, most of the people that were in the Wetlands Program and got that early training that we hired and set up the very strict training program ended up being Chief of Realty Programs Nationwide. Of course, Al demonstrated his knowledge well in this region.

QUESTION: Well, in the early days of the Endangered Species Program when you were here, I take it that you were probably here when they listed the snail darter?

ANSWER: They listed the Snail Darter and in fact Gary Henry was on my staff. Alex Montgomery was my deputy. Alex was in the fisheries program and he went through this thing, grades, to keep my job, go after change, a wall of people and he is the only one that I know of that took a downgrade in

that whole thing. I hired Bob Cooke from Alaska. Bob Cooke is now ARD in ----- . Bob did a good job in Endangered Species Program. Dave Flemming, I hired him into the region and Marshal Jones. Marshal Jones is in Washington. I said "You come down to Atlanta, it's never really hot here. It's always kind of moderate." In my experience up to that time in Atlanta it was really pretty nice. But the year he arrived it really got hot and he keeps reminding me of that. "Boy, this isn't what you told me." I said "Well, things change." Anyway, we had a good crew in the Endangered Species Program and it was aggressive. Many of the issues that are still going on, the Red Cockheaded Woodpecker and things such as that are still highlighted today as important species. Listing was a big thing. (You must have listed an awful lot of species in those early days) We did, we did. And critical habitat, the rules weren't such at that point that you had to go through all kinds of Federal ----- so we described critical habitat by just describing it and putting one little notice in the register and that became critical habitat. Since those days critical habitat hasn't been considered quite as important as it was in those early days. We did a lot of work with the Manatee and the Manatee is still on the forefront. I got to know a lot of people on the Marine Mammal Commission because they bird-dogged us quite a bit. The Federal Aid Program is like it always is. It's run pretty well ----- by the states. It didn't require as much time as the Endangered Species Program. It was a matter of keeping track of what's going on in the Federal Aid Program (Who was chief of Federal Aid when you were the ARD?) I replaced Ed Chamberlain and it was John Hall that had that job the whole time I was in the job, I think he, well he retired when I came back here. Anyway, I made the application for the Deputy job in Denver and I made an application for the ARW job in Minneapolis and Tom called me and initially asked if I would ever think about coming back to Minneapolis. I said, yeah, I would think about it. My dad had cancer and I

knew he didn't have a whole lot of time to live and I said "Well, yeah, sure I'd like to do that." He said, "Put your application in." I said "Well, I'll do that." And I did send it in and it got lost. In the meantime, I had talked to Don Minnick and Minnick said you're not well known enough in the Fish and Wildlife Service for me. You're not going to be selected as Deputy. I sort of chuckled about that. He's telling me I wasn't well known and I was wondering who he was. (He had just come in to the service in the state of Colorado) He selected Bob Shields, who was a good selection, but Bob retired not too long after that. And Don went on other places. Anyway, I put the application in and Harvey called me up and said, "Aren't you going to apply for this job?" And I said, "I applied for it." He says, "Well, we don't have your application." So, I frantically put that stuff together again and sent it off and when everything settled down I was selected to go to Minneapolis. I had always wanted to be in ARW in some capacity besides realty and this gave me the opportunity. I was there six years, from '81 to '86. (When in '81 did you take that job? Do you remember?) It was in, well, it must have been, I think we moved about August. Someplace in there. We went house hunting, I remember, in February or March. It might have been a little earlier than that, say July or August, someplace in there. So we moved back in to Minneapolis which had a very aggressive program. I always admired Region Three, because I did Region Four, but Region Three the people up there always seemed to be one step ahead of everybody else. It was just the nature of the activity there. So it was a good time and we had good experiences. I worked with Jim Gritman, who I have great respect for as the Deputy Regional Director. And Harvey was in to everything, you know, like he always is. (That was Harvey Nelson) That's Harvey Nelson's style and Jim sort of ran the region. We had significant achievements during that period on a lot of areas. One was Desoto Lake; we took care of the boating problem

and the carp problem. We built a specific ----- to handle carp and got all that speed boat, and water skiing and all that stuff taken care of. Much to the work of the ----- ----- who was the refuge manager but I look at it as one of the major accomplishments that we had in Region Three. As far as the Wetlands Program which was full blown and we did some initial work with Ducks Unlimited, we are talking about partnerships now, but we set up the cooperative agreement with Ducks Unlimited. I was in the first part of the first dedication of the first Ducks Unlimited project in Minnesota and Bob Meeks, who ultimately set up his station in Bismarck, was along in those early trips and we got a lot of work done with Ducks Unlimited. The forerunner of all the partnerships we do with them right now. The Wetlands Program moves along very well, not that there weren't problems, but, share revenues were an issue. The counties in Minnesota were not getting their fair share, they felt, and we had to go before the State Land Exchange Commission for everything we did and usually the governor went along and approved the stuff but he kept reminding us that the share revenue issue had to be resolved at some time and we are at a point now where I think they're actually closed out of some counties because they won't approve it because the share rental is so short. From there when the ARW job was vacant here, I can't remember if Jim Lankford called me or if ----- called me, anyway my wife, when we were here, she was sad when we left Atlanta, so I sort of, in the back of my mind, said if I ever get a chance to get back to Atlanta I will probably have to take it. There was a deputy job and there was an ARW job here. I had done some work with Howard Larson, this is another funny deal, in fact we had done the Washington Office review two or three times in succession. And he was R.D. Reginthal, a real good friend of mine, and the deputy job was open here, that was before David Allen was selected, I also applied for Jim Lankford's job because Jim

asked me if I would ever consider coming back and I said, "Sure, I would consider coming back if there was an opportunity." But I thought I had a shot at the deputy job. I felt I was in, when I talked to Jim ----- and he said "Well, you know, I may make a selection but, that isn't the one that is going to help." And we're going along and I get this phone call from Howard Larson, it was really funny, and he said "Dave Allen has been selected as Deputy in Region Five and Region Four." And I wondered why he would be calling me and telling me about that. Then about an hour later he said "Did I call you and tell you about Dave Allen?" I said, "Yeah." "Well I didn't mean to do that," he said. Anyway, I knew that Dave had gotten the job and that I felt that I was still in contention for a job here which ultimately was selected for, and Jim and I had worked in the Wetlands program years ago and I sort of trailed him around the country, so I felt that there were enough people who knew who I was that if there was a chance for the job I would probably get it. Anyway that brought me back to Atlanta and I have been here nine years.

QUESTION: When did you come back to Atlanta?

ANSWER: April of '86. And those have been good years. We've had significant accomplishments. I think we've added about twenty-six refuges to the National Wildlife Refuge System. You got the Private Lands program, I feel, moving along real well. And as far as wetlands restoration is concerned, I think this region has really moved in the forefront of that area, although we've had our discussions with Washington, that's usual and to be expected because they can't have the full picture. Same time the North American Waterfowl Management Plan was developed and I was on the executive board for three of those joint ventures. We've had significant achievements there. I think the lower Mississippi Valley, in particular, has set a standard for the whole country and the

acquisitions and the work down there, the evaluations, the whole project has been very well done. Charles Baxter, who is the coordinator, has done a ----- job in that whole area. Keeping it going. And there has been a lot of competition between various joint ventures but I think the lower Mississippi Valley is probably one of the best. The Gulf Coast Joint Venture which was run by Region Two, we were a partner in there and the Atlantic Coast we were a partner with Region Five. Little less of a role but I think in the Atlantic Coast the Ace Basin, which I think is a model for ecosystem, if there ever was one, where we worked together with all people in a large geographical area and everybody is pulling together to maintain that as close as you can to its current condition as possible. And in large measure, there are some major projects Lower Mississippi Valley is working in the same way. Atlantic Coast has got a lot of smaller projects but Dick Dyer, who is the coordinator up there, has done a pretty good job at trying to keep that all together. Bob Streeter who is the Executive Director -----Harvey Nelson that job is now gone to the assistant directorship replacing Dave Olson in Washington. (That's the assistant director for ----- Wildlife) ----- Wildlife, right. So that job is vacant. I don't know if they have somebody in that job right now or not. I think, Dave Smith or somebody is sort of handling details right now. I think they're still looking for someone to fall in there and work on that thing full time. It's a big job with a lot of coordination goes on. I think that's a barely rough sketch of where I've been and what the service is ----- and one of the questions you have in here is: "What do you like about the service?" I think there are a couple of things in my career I was lucky. I got to go on a couple of new programs. Many people don't have that chance. I mean, you got the wetlands program written out in instructions, was way ahead of the instructions in most instances and instructions followed and wrote the wetlands handbook; I think is still in place except for

the current revisions. Endangered Species Program, nobody hardly knew what that was and the act was brand new in 1973 and it was again where you had a lot of trial and error and as the legislation got passed and what's this consultation all these things all about. I had a chance to work in that closely with a lot of people who were real good. The personnel within the Service, I think, are all four-0, I don't know of a bad experience that I have had with people.

QUESTION: You mentioned all the people were four-0. You and I understand that (I mean that is superlative) that goes back to our military days.

ANSWER: And they used to kid me about my military background. Talking those terms. Unconsciously, a lot of times. But guys like Frank ----- from Public Use didn't understand what staff and line was and when I came back in here and started playing that game, he had to figure out what that was and finally, I guess, he did figure it out what it was. No, I think my experience, I wouldn't give it up if I had it to do over again. It's probably circumstantial because I didn't start off knowing anything about the service. My desire was to work in the private sector. I enjoyed the Navy. Could have just as well made the Navy a full time career if it hadn't been for health reasons. Working for the service during the time I worked I know there is a period of transition here but I think we went through several transitions through the whole time I was along and some way they all seemed to work out. Ecosystems is not something that is really all that new to the service. The terminology and how you line up to do that may be but it can be done.

QUESTION: A couple of questions that I might ask during the time you were in Minneapolis, can you remember who, you mentioned Burwell

ANSWER: Bob Burwell was the Regional Director. The Deputy was Walt Shaffer.

Sam Jergenson was Chief of River Basins. Warren Norton, was it Warren Norton, no, Sam Jergenson had Endangered Species, the early part of Endangered Species and coordination and that. Warren Norton was your counterpart, River Basins. Chief Engineer, all I can think of, I can see Stevenson, I think his last name was. Tall guy. Good, good crew. Personnel officer was ----- Larson after Audrey Burke, she had retired and Tom ----- who is now the ARD for budget and finance was just a rookie right out of the Army or Air Force. I can't remember where. And there was a lady that ran the budget and finance and the difference was I can just see the old ----- building in Minneapolis. Here were all these people with the green eye shades, free computer, and travel vouchers and processing, purchasing, whatever, they had a whole host of people as compared to today when you do most of the stuff computerized. And Realty was just a small section and Refuges they had Forest Carpenter, he was, of course, the Chief of Refuges and they had ----- managers at that time. I can't remember all their names. Wes ----- was one of the fellows who was there and who is now, most of the guys are retired that worked in ----- in the region at that time. Earl Hampton was in the Region part of the time. Russ Fielding was here. (Russ Fielding was in Minneapolis for a while?) Yes, he was a Deputy, came in here. (He was what? Deputy Regional Director?) Yes, he was interesting because he came in to Atlanta, he never wore an overcoat, it could be forty below outside, he'd just complain, he smoked big long cigars at one point and so did Bob Jergenson, Chief of Realty, so they always came in there every morning and he would beg a cigar off of Jergenson and I had an office next to them and those two guys would light up and like wssssshhhhhhhh. (A real smoke screen)

QUESTION: When you were here in Atlanta (I came in when Ed Carlson and Jack ----- was just going to Minneapolis. In fact we were here on an ----- hunting trip and we

were here for his going away, Jack ----- going away) When Jack left here as the Deputy Regional Director and went to Minneapolis as Regional Director.

ANSWER: At that time ----- Morgan and five or six guys who were in the ----- specialists, whatever those jobs were now where they were grooming these guys like Don -----, Bill -----, Bill Morgan (Was Bob Shields) I don't know if Bob, can't remember if Bob Shields, Bob Shields was in Washington when I was so I don't think he was. Anyway, there were five or six guys ----- ----- was one of them. They're all in the special assistant role to be special trained to move into Regional Directorship. Some of them did, some didn't, some made some selections not to do that. (Did we call those Associate Regional Directors at that time?) Seems to me that is what they were but they sat right next to the RD and the ----- really didn't want to handle it. He passed it on to these fellows and they did a pretty fair job on it. They weren't deputies but they were (I guess we had a Regional Director, a Deputy Regional Director and this Associate Regional Director was kind of a training slot. And you say Phil Morgan was here?) Phil was here. Of course Phil, he can speak for himself, but he ultimately went to Washington in Refuges and Wildlife. You had a ----- part of Atlanta that was changing ethnic groups. Couldn't sell. Couldn't sell. Couldn't sell. And finally, I think that became so burdensome, he elected to come back to Atlanta. That was probably six or eight months that he was in Washington before he did come back, but he did come back and I think that had an impact ultimately on his whole career and I think he, I know he made an election at that time to stay in Atlanta in whatever role and filled numerous jobs in the region before I came back here. I was fortunate enough to have a Deputy named Phil Morgan while I was ARD and made a lot of accomplishments. We had worked together and understood each other pretty well so I feel a lot of the

successes that we had in Realty are attributed back to Morgan and the whole crew back there, of course. Having him as a Deputy was a real plus.

QUESTION: When Jack Henfield left and went to Minneapolis as the RD who came in behind Jack as a Deputy Regional Director?

ANSWER: Ray Vaughn. There's a story there, too. I was in Washington the same time Ray was. I was chief of planning and he and I went up to see the assistant secretary. We had to present all these land acquisitions proposals and one time, I don't know, I lost it, I guess, because you have all these questions, I finally remember, I can't remember who was in that job, I said, "I thought we were all a team. Aren't we supposed to be on the same team, trying to do the same thing?" I was really perturbed and the guy says, "Yeah, we are but we got to go through this." I said, "Let me ask you it don't make any sense. You're drilling us about stuff that we told you all there is to tell about it. You seem like you don't want to hear what we have to say." And I went. Ray Vaughn was there and he just sort of "What's this guy doing anyway." Ray had to go to all the meetings, of course, as his role in Washington. (What was Ray doing in Washington?) He was in Refuges and Wildlife. Which was, he was a Fishery guy but that was to broaden his experience and prepare him for a Deputy job down here. (Was he actually the division chief in Washington?) I think he was for a period. I can't say that for sure (but maybe a deputy) Deputy, I think, because I think Lynn was there and I think Ray was our principal deputy at that point. (So Ray Vaughn at that time would have been ----- who at that time was the chief of refuge.) I don't remember. We called it Refuge and Wildlife or just Refuges. And of course ----- was up in Washington at the same time. ----- always went to Migratory Bird Commission to present a migratory bird and he was Chief of Refuges like Ron Shallenberger is today.

And, of course, Jim has a wide, wide, long standing background on the refuge program. Although, when he was here, he kept reminding me to take off that -----
----- This is Fish and Wildlife Service. I tend to be ----- sometimes about what's going on. So, Ray came into the region. He was the Deputy Regional Director under Ken Black. He was a true executive officer I would call him because Ken traveled a lot and Ray handled a great many of the details, and quite well. When he was going to retire, interesting story, just a little sidelight, and it probably doesn't bear repeating anything you might put together, but, he says "There's two guys in the region that should get this job. Benson, you should get it or Philmore. This job should go to one of you guys." He said "that's interesting. I'll keep that under my hat and see what happens." Meantime, I'm off to Minneapolis and I did apply but Walt ----- got the job. I was still here when Walt came in here. That's the way it was. Walt got the job, we were still here and I sort of ----- and ----- a little bit and said whatever happened to your idea, but he never did respond to that. (Do you remember where Walt came from?) Yes, he came out of Refuge and Wildlife the BOHP program in Washington. Phil, at the same time, was the BOHP coordinator in this region and they had one in every region. Walt did a real good job with the BOHP program. I can see why he got the job. There were no questions about his qualifications but, when he came in, I had never worked with Walt ----- before that but we were in Endangered Species Program, mostly a lot of hot issues, and he wasn't feeling about consultation or Endangered Species or anything like that. He said "Before I sign anything I want to see the file on all this stuff." I said, "Walt, you don't have the time or the inclination to want to see the file on these." "Send it all up here," he said. We said "ok". So for about a week, we sent everything up there and finally he called me and said, "I can't handle all this stuff. I'm gonna have to

believe you guys." I said, "That's the way it is in the region, Walt. You've got to believe. If you want some questions answered we can answer all the questions but for you to think you are going to go through all this volume of stuff that's been going on for several years you don't have that kind of time." So he worked for Ken for a while and when Ken retired he became Active Regional Director until ultimately ----- was selected to come down here. Meantime, I was in the ----- and got an eight month assignment as Regional Director in Minneapolis. He and I went around to most of the refuges and he had some pretty good input into some of the things we were doing there. So, his training on the job was really done by Jim Gritman and to some extent, me, from the point of view from Regional aspect. He knew he was going to be transferred out of Washington but I don't know whether he knew he wanted to come here, but I don't know as he knew he was going to come here. (He didn't know whether he was going to get Minneapolis or Atlanta) Yeah, right, and there was a lot of pressure on Harvey at that time far beyond the Fish and Wildlife Service. A fellow named George ----- who had a lot of ties politically, writing campaign and wrote Jansen and wrote the Secretary of Interior tons and tons of letters, and I can remember one day getting instructions down from Washington through me to George, because George worked for me, "Call all this writing stuff off, we understand." And Harvey was then sent back to Minneapolis as Regional Director and Jim went back to Washington for a short period and then came down here.

QUESTION: Where did ----- move on to?

ANSWER: He went into small business and then he died of cancer. Big guy. He was an interesting fellow. He actually was a lay preacher, I believe, on Sundays. Big, tall guy. I went on several field trips with him. He knew everybody. I don't really know

what his ----- background was but he, except World War II, he knew CNO Vessie and he came into Minneapolis. He said "Boy, you want to get your picture taken with him. You want to be an Admiral, I can get you to be an Admiral." "How can you do that?" "Well, I'll introduce you to Vessie and they'll pull political strings." "It don't work that way in the Navy." "Well, we'll do it anyway." So I got a picture with Vessie and we went over to the ----- club or wherever they had this dinner and he gave a speech and whatever. But George was operating at that very high level. In fact he went to Washington before that North American Plan, no, before the Fish and Wildlife Foundation was formulated. He did some of that early work. He lived next door to Fielding. And those guys apparently came to an early understanding that they didn't like each other. And we sort of got Vessie back in the region. That there was a little conflict going on between George ----- and Russ Fielding. I think their personalities were somewhat alike so they tended to clash. Of course Russ looked like a Senator. He traveled around like a Senator in Washington. George knew all these guys so I suppose. But George thought he was going to get to be part of the foundation alignment but he never did. He worked about six or eight months on some of the early stuff for the Fish and Wildlife Foundation. ----- and things ----- like I should have done like you suggested, sat down and really thought through this and putting it all down and whatever. (But you had been kind of busy with selling your house, packing up to move back to Wisconsin) That all happened quicker than I thought it would because I went to North America and spent some time with my daughter who just had a new baby and went over to Wisconsin. I told them, "I'm going back home and sell the house. I'm gonna put it on the market." In the meantime, before I went I had this fellow come by and knock on the door and said, "What are those stakes in the yard and what are you going to do with them?" "Maybe sell my house

sometime." He said, "I'm interested ----- ----- come again. An older gentleman from Alabama. I just sort of discounted it. ----- the yard's too big and I'm gonna sell part of the yard. I had an acre and a half. Sell part of it to my neighbor and he said, "I want to bring my daughter and son-in-law over." So they came over and looked. I left, came back in two weeks and here's an offer. Written offer, contract, everything else. He had given it to a realtor in town in my neighborhood. She said, "I got this envelope for you and I don't know what to do with it." I said, "Well, bring it over and we will take a look at it." And there it was, so we negotiated and we did sell the land off to my neighbor with a couple conditions. He says, "I want to move in on the fifteenth of May." I said, "I can't move by the fifteenth of May. That is too short a time." So I started to compromise which was probably in my favor. "I said I'll close on the fifteenth of May but you got to let me stay in the house till the 30th of May." He finally agreed on that. We had the closing two weeks ago and of all the houses I have been in and out of, that's been the smoothest, slickest, easiest sell that I can imagine. No open houses, no realtor, no nothing. All we had was a surveyor and closing went just like nothing.

QUESTION: I was just trying to think if there was anything else I could ask. Oh, yeah, back to the Endangered Species Program when you started here in the Southeast Region. You were the Assistant Regional Director at the time and who headed up your endangered species office?

ANSWER: Alex Montgomery was the Chief of Endangered Species Program ----- and John Hall had the Federal Aid side of it. ----- Kentucky, he said, "Well, you know now." He'd say, "There's too much work here." But I don't think anybody, unless you worked with Alex, appreciated him as much as I did. He was a very smart fellow and very methodical and very good

----- And -----
was here in the region. He hired him on at region five. Gary Henry, Bob Cooke, myself and I can't remember the secretaries, a lot of them have moved on to different jobs.

QUESTION: Who were some of the other ARD's when you were here in the Federal Aid, Endangered Species ---- (in the region here?) Yeah.

ANSWER: Jim Lankford was the RW, Richardson was -----, Bob ----- came in before Richardson. We had a retreat at ----- when this thing was all set up and that's when we all got together. Area managers were there as well. Bill ----- and ----- . Russ ---- . Russ had that inviting personality which I think he still has. I got to know him pretty well; you just had to take him with a grain of salt mostly. Jim Lankford was there ----- with Bob ----- at that point. I was Federal Assistance. And who else is there. (who would have been ----- . What did we call it at that time?) ----- budget finance. And of course the Deputy was depending on the time. Either Ray Vaughn or ----- . It was Ray Vaughn when it first started out. And Larry ----- came to that first meeting, he and Ken Black go back a long time. And like usual Larry had sage advice for all of us. I knew Larry from Wisconsin ----- and also from working in the Dakotas, he's always had high interest in the Wetlands Program and what do you do with Wetlands. I can remember riding on a DC3 going across the Dakotas with him. Asking what he could do for us. That's the personality Larry had. How can I help you out.

QUESTION: Well, at that time Larry was what?

ANSWER: He had just started with the Wildlife Management (He worked then for Dan Poole) Yeah, Dan Poole. (Dan would

have been the president or whatever the number one slot was and Larry was his) principal assistant. And that is interesting mentioning Dan Poole. When I was in Region Three we felt that the Wetland, that the Waterfall Program was really lagging. So, we prevailed upon the Management Institute, Dan Poole, and told him we would get all of our data together if they would take it on and see if they could do something to spur ----- whatever. So, we sort of laid out what the issues were, the whole migratory bird program and they had a meeting in Sacramento with all the regional directors and Poole gave his speech and whatever, and out of that came some initial changes for the migratory bird program. To try to get ducks at a higher level than they were. It seemed like they were sort of slipping in the service. I still have those notes from the Sacramento meeting someplace but the idea was to lesson some of the regulations, change some of the regulations, get management on a higher plane and whatever. It was a very beneficial thrust for the migratory bird program at that time. And that was about a year or two before he retired. He was more than willing to do it. He may have been sort of a critic along the way about what the service was doing. I think the idea was that we get the critic to really, if he's got something to say, to (help us fix it) help us fix it. That worked pretty well. Yeah, there are a lot of those names that sort of slipped by. I think I saw him at the last Southeastern I went to, I think he was there. The other plus in the Southeast region is working with the states. I think my association with all the state directors has always been very good. I felt we always had good rapport. You know we criticized the feds but you could always talk to them one on one and really get down to what the issues are. I think during my tenure here, I think we had good relations with the states.

QUESTION: Yeah, I think that's been one of the things I have observed here about the Southeast Region. No matter what the issue

Is and we might have some disagreements, but the relationship between the service and the state directors and their staff is pretty good.

ANSWER: I attribute that to the Southeastern and the role the Service has tried to play along with that. That's where you get to meet the guy sort of on a one-to-one basis. I think if they respect the individual and respect where you are trying to go, that goes a long way towards keeping it all together. (Yes, it sure does)

Well, Harold, I can't think of anything else right now.

OK

We'll turn the machine off.

Alright. Well, it's been good.

Well, I appreciate you taking the time to come by and do this.